

HB 1027Larita Huges_fav.

Thank you for the opportunity to advocate on behalf of Maryland students. I support HB 1027. Making this change helps remove barriers to students achieving their college degrees.

While working is a reality for many students, particularly Pell-eligible students, eliminating the work requirement for access to SNAP benefits minimizes the additional stress of trying to find financial support to help cover a basic necessity like food costs in addition to the cost of tuition, housing, books, and other fees.

Another benefit of students being able to access SNAP benefits is that the program offers portability in accessing food resources. At the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, we have a food and hygiene pantry. While this resource is available to students when they are on campus. An on-campus food pantry cannot offer the portability in accessing food that SNAP benefits offers. The student with SNAP benefits can access food resources even if they are not on campus. For instance, if the student is at home on summer break. They likely are working to save money for school. However, the money that would be used to purchase food can then be applied to the cost of their college tuition and fees.

First-generation students face so many challenges in earning degrees. According to Pew Research (2021), of adults ages 22 to 59 who do not have a college-educated parent only 26% have a bachelor's degree. The reasons for not completing may be varied but the results of not completing impacts as well. The student who does not complete a degree but incurs educational debt may still require government assistance. On the other hand, the benefits of achieving a college degree are beneficial not only for an individual but for society. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (Torpey, 2021), college graduates with a bachelor's degree earn a median of \$1305 per week and experience unemployment at a 5.51% rate. Whereas, a high school graduate's median earnings per week is \$78 with a 9% unemployment rate. These individuals are more likely to be gainfully employed. Accordingly, a college graduate who is earning more is contributing more to society via spending on personal goods, services, and taxes.

Making this change helps remove barriers to students achieving their college degrees. If the least among us are supported in the quest for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness then we all will benefit from their accomplishment.

Elka Torpey, "Education pays, 2020," *Career Outlook*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, June 2021.

Fry Richard, "First-Generation College Graduates Lag Behind Their Peers on Key Economic Outcomes," Pew Research. May 2021